

Ira H. Brooks House
350 North Fulton Avenue
Fresno
Fresno County
California

HABS No. CA-2688

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

IRA H. BROOKS HOUSE

HABS No. CA-2688

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Location: 350 North Fulton Avenue, Fresno, Fresno County, California.

UTM: 11-250094-4070380

Quad: Fresno South, Calif., 7.5' series, 1963 (photorevised 1981)

Date of Construction: Circa 1905

Present Owner: Jess Herrera, 224 North Fulton, Fresno CA

Significance: The Ira H. Brooks House was determined eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places in 1991 at the local level: significant under criterion A for its association with and contribution to the development and character of both North Park and the greater North Park neighborhood; under criterion B for its association with prominent Fresno businessman Ira H. Brooks; and under criterion C for its embodiment of the strong representative characteristics of the early Arts and Crafts movement as a primary example of the Craftsman/Dutch Colonial Revival design.

Historian: Karen J. Weitze, Consulting Architectural Historian

John W. Snyder
Chief, Historic Architectural Specialty Branch
Environmental Program
California Department of Transportation
1120 N Street
Sacramento CA 95814

May 13, 1998

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Ira H. Brooks commissioned the large two-story, Craftsman/Dutch Colonial Revival dwelling at 350 North Fulton Avenue circa 1905. The Fresno City Directories first listed Brooks in 1904 (the prior directory had been published in 1901). The junior partner of Bowling & Brooks furniture located at 1210 I Street, Ira H. Brooks appears to have been successful in his business, and by 1907 headed his own enterprise--the Brooks Furniture Company. During his first years in Fresno, Brooks lived at 1860 I Street. As was often the case for residents of the greater North Park neighborhood of the 1902-15 period, he moved from the L Street historic district area immediately adjacent to downtown to the North Park streetcar suburb. Brooks' move into the core of North Park--onto the major streetscape directly facing the streetcar line--as one of the very first residents of the neighborhood (with his dwelling one of only a few present according to the 1906 Sanborn maps) appears to be indicative of his coincident good fortune in business. Ira H. Brooks' enterprise was one of a handful of furniture stores located in Fresno; it is not known what type of goods he sold. The North Park neighborhood developed as a forthright Arts and Crafts enclave in Fresno--possibly, Brooks offered one of the well-known brands of Mission furniture for sale in his store.

Just after the turn of the century Fresno began to grow north of its established downtown. Up until this time, Fresno's upper-and-upper-middle-class residents lived in a multi-block area roughly bounded by Divisadero, Blackstone, Stanislaus and Broadway --today the L Street historic district. Northernmost working-class neighborhoods existed above Divisadero and dated from circa 1884-1900, inscribed in a platted U-configuration delineated by Griffith's Villa Addition to the east (1884), Central Addition to the south (1887) and Kroeger's Addition to the west (1888). Each of these bounding tracts was quite narrow, with the north edge of the area along Belmont Avenue. Both Central Addition and Kroeger's Addition were laid out as densely platted narrow lots, intended for modest dwellings. Griffith's Villa Addition, the earliest of the group, likely was originally intended for country estates of some type--with individual lots of 171.23 x 250 feet dimensions. In fact, the area filled in immediately adjacent to its western (West Avenue/Roosevelt Avenue), southern (Divisadero Street) and eastern (Glenn Avenue) edges and fairly completely in its eastern half with working-class housing.

The area between Divisadero, Belmont, West and Blackstone witnessed its first growth during the late 1880s and early 1890s. Approximately a mile in length east to west, and a half-mile in width north to south, the area contained 12 original plats of 1884-1888, with the Altamont Addition platted at the eastern edge in 1888 and with a small re-platting for Inn's Addition in 1897. The Inn's Addition was the only new tract during the 1890s. The development of the eastern half of the working-class neighborhood extended across Belmont Avenue to include the Belmont Addition of 1887. By about 1900 only the central core of the area remained unplatted and undeveloped. An interior residential neighborhood-to-be, this land was to house the first migration of the L Street district upper-and-upper-middle class residents northwards from downtown, and to attract those working-class residents who moved upwards into the middle class just after the turn of the century.

Surrounded by spottily-infilled working-class streets--and to the east by sizable enclaves--the platting of North Park in 1902 initiated development of the new neighborhood. Platted as Fresno's first streetcar suburb from land owned by area real-estate entrepreneur William G. Uridge (listed in the city directories as a capitalist) and Benjamin G. McDougall (architect and sometime-speculator in land development), North Park became a major central Fresno residential neighborhood heralded by the Fresno *Evening Democrat* in January 1903 as "Fresno's 'Nob Hill.'" Businessman Albert G. Wishon arrived in Fresno at this time to become General Manager of the San Joaquin Light and Power Company, Director and Manager of the Fresno City Railway, and, Vice-President and Manager of the Fresno Water Company. Wishon's city railway operated the electric streetcar line along Forthcamp (Fulton) Avenue as one of three routes developed in 1902-03 outwards from

downtown. (Sunnyside and Recreation lines completed the triumvirate.) Wishon's streetcar service along Forthcamp was first single-track, but by 1907 efforts were underway for expanded service. The Forthcamp line saw double-track construction beginning in 1909. Bounded by Forthcamp, Van Ness/College, Franklin and Mildreda, the original North Park plat almost immediately expanded with subsequent sequential plattings.

The greater North Park neighborhood developed over the 1902-15 period through growth to the north and west into the area previously unsettled. North Park of 1902, the North Park Extension of 1902, Boles North Park of 1903 and Forthcamp's Addition No.2 of 1908 all contributed to the cohesive character of a near-downtown suburb of sizable proportions. Boundaries for the area are generally Nevada, Van Ness, Belmont and Broadway. Several streetscapes within pre-existing late 19th century tracts nearest the vacant land either developed as a part of the greater North Park neighborhood, or redeveloped to become a part of the area. Within the original Forthcamp's Addition of 1886, the 100 blocks of both Fulton and Van Ness redeveloped to become a part of the greater North Park neighborhood. Along the east side of Van Ness between Mildreda and Belmont (particularly between Mildreda and Franklin), growth patterns reflected an association with North Park. This area had been surveyed as a part of the Muller & Northcraft Addition of 1888. It is doubtful that the northern portions of the addition had actually witnessed much residential building by the time of the North Park stimulus. The Sunset Tract of 1910, a narrow linear neighborhood along the west side of Broadway between Belmont and Voorman, additionally reflected North Park Arts and Crafts values: this area appears to have coherently developed with large middle and middle working class bungalows--solidly a community neighborhood for emigrant and second-generation Germans, Swedes and Danes to the near west of greater North Park.

North Park became a distinctive architectural area in Fresno, with many of the residents incorporating their views of life into the dwellings in which they lived. Many of the houses incorporated pergolas, open-air sitting porches and screened-in sleeping porches as a part of their design, often with porches on two levels of a dwelling, and with more than one porch per residence. The appearance of most houses was directly influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement, either with Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, or shingled Craftsman detailing. Often aesthetics combined features from the three treatments. cobblestone, clinker brick, and interior fireplace tile were employed in almost all dwellings. In many cases, first-story rooms opened onto one another with sliding doors to create one large space. Most houses were wood-frame, two-story, and in the \$6,000 to \$10,000 range. Architects repeatedly noted as designing dwellings for the greater North Park neighborhood included Alexander Culbertson Swartz, Henry F. Starbuck, and Eugene Mathewson. The indoor-outdoor life philosophy was furthermore noteworthy in the presence of the Sample Sanitarium of 1912-13 at the center of the neighborhood--although, the sanitarium may well have initiated an exodus by many residents to even more northern suburbs in about 1915.

Residents of the North Park neighborhood represented the civic-business community, and, were often leaders within Fresno. First occupants, interestingly enough though perhaps not surprisingly, were often in real estate and the building industry themselves. Houses erected for these individuals served as an encouragement for others to invest in the new development and became a kind of insurance for their direct financial interests in the success of North Park. Both architect Benjamin G. McDougall and capitalist William G. Uridge built houses in their development by 1904 (McDougall at 314 North Van Ness and Uridge at 370 North Van Ness). Others in the immediate North Park neighborhood by 1904-05 included Albert Graves Wishon (at 340 North Fulton), Brooks himself, Matthew H. McIndoo (farmer; at 345 North Van Ness), Emory A. Donahoo (of Donahoo, Emmons and Company, sellers of hardware, paints, plumbing and bicycles; at 211 North Van Ness), Frederic M. Lee (cashier of the California Raisin Growers' Association; at 304 North Van Ness), F.A. Boole (manager of the Sanger Lumber Company; at 340 North Van Ness); R.B. Parker (president of Parker Roth Company, sellers of groceries and hardware; at 235 North Fulton), Frederick W. Fisher (president of Glassford Hardware Company and the Pacific Investment Company; at 205 North Fulton), and, William D.

Coates (manager of the Sperry Flour Company, at 264 North Van Ness). Coates' son, William D. junior, worked as a draftsman for architect McDougall at this time.

A second wave of residential settlement for North Park occurred during the years 1906-13, with the peak strongly discernible in the listings of *Builder and Contractor* in 1909-11. These citizens most clearly represented the Progressive civic leaders of Fresno, with a number of proto-agribusiness farming families in the group as well. Its members adopted an Arts and Crafts lifestyle through their created environment in the greater North Park neighborhood. Residents of this period included William W. Hanger, a successful vineyardist who became a buyer for the Earl Fruit Company (at 425 North Van Ness, 1906); Robert McIndoo, a prominent vineyardist and elder member of the successful farming McIndoo family (who purchased architect McDougall's house at 314 North Van Ness in 1907); Benjamin M. Stone, a farmer who actually moved a circa 1878/95 farmhouse onto the site at 408 North Fulton in 1907; John William Proffitt, a relocated Texas rancher-turned-citrus grower with orchards near Sanger (405 North Fulton, 1909-13); Amazon Scholl Hays, vice-president of the Fresno National Bank and respected banker statewide, an avid hunter and fisherman, as well as Fresno civic leader (at 330 North Fulton, circa 1907); Chester H. Rowell, editor of the Fresno *Republican* and nationally known leader within the Progressive movement (at 269 North Fulton, 1909); John G. Porter, a carpenter-builder (at 420 North Van Ness, 1909); Newman J. Levinson, president of the Fresno Publishing Company (at 439 North Van Ness, 1911); Frank A. Homan, president-owner of Homan & Company sporting goods, and a one-time mayor of Fresno (at 820 East Mildreda, 1911), Charles H. Cobb, president of the Cobbs-Evans Automobile Company (at 437 North Fulton, 1913), and, Ivan Carter McIndoo, rancher and son of elder-statesman William McIndoo (at 410 North Van Ness, 1913).

Bernard Maybeck's 1909 house for Progressive Republican Chester H. Rowell at the southwest corner of Fulton and Mildreda (facing Fulton) was perhaps the neighborhood Arts and Crafts exemplar. Its first design called for a double roof system to accommodate the semi-arid climate as a summer cooling and ventilating device; the entire attic in the side gables was also designed to be opened during the hot months. As-built, the building envelope took on symmetrical, Colonial Revival proportions. The entry porch functioned independently as an outdoor room with access indirectly from each side. As in many progressive Arts and Crafts dwellings, the front entry opened directly into a living room, without a preliminary hallway. The living room and dining room were connected by sliding doors and could be made into one large space. A screened-in rear porch opened onto the dining room on the first story and also extended off upstairs bedrooms. Upstairs bedrooms for both Mr. and Mrs. Rowell opened onto a balcony above the entry porch indoor-outdoor room below. Landscaping was also typical of the Arts and Crafts. The dwelling was placed well back on its lot, elevated above both streets. Wild strawberries were noted on Maybeck's drawings at the grade change and on the banks around the perimeter of the house and projecting entry porch. Shade trees, planter boxes and trellises complemented the site.

Key to the Arts and Crafts character of the greater North Park neighborhood were not only the political leanings and civic involvement of its residents, but also the streetscape and individual lot plantings that symbolically referenced the larger middle landscape of Yosemite and the vast surrounding raisin vineyards. Yosemite to the east offered a favorite retreat for San Francisco Bay Area Arts and Crafts participants; the magnificent natural setting attracted artists, hikers, early Sierra Club members (including both Rowells), and suffragists alike. Individuals living in Arts and Crafts enclaves such as North Park brought the outdoor life home through their sleeping porches and screened sitting rooms. Living rooms typically featured a tiled or brick (clinker or pressed) fireplace, which in Arts and Crafts dwellings like that of John G. Porter could sometimes be completely opened to the outside. Nighttime temperatures often dropped severely after mild Spring and autumn days: a fire in an open room recreated the experience of camping, without any real discomfort from true cold weather. Also deliberately behind-the-scenes were allusions to the cultivated

landscape of the agricultural colonies. Acres of raisin vineyards defined outlying Fresno, just as acres of orange groves defined the Arts and Crafts communities of Pasadena, Redlands and Riverside to the south. The "middle landscape" was a domesticated wild place, a popular image for the aficionados of the Arts and Crafts. The John William Proffitt and the Benjamin G. McDougall/Robert McIndoo houses are excellent examples of individual large-scale lot treatments within the neighborhood. Mr. Proffitt bought six lots on which he built a half-shingled Colonial Revival/late Queen Anne residence, with two lots initially landscaped as garden and orchard. Sanborn maps indicate that architect McDougall, too, designed his residence to be deep-set on its extensive Van Ness Avenue site, likely surrounded by orchards and gardens planted and maintained by farmer-rancher Robert McIndoo. The primary North Park streetscape was that of Forthcamp (Fulton). It too, was landscaped in about 1910 with deodar cedars, while the secondary streetscape of Van Ness was planted with sycamores (later replaced by holly oaks).

Also emphatically a part of the imagery associated with the middle landscape were visions of high-speed travel. With origins in the Socialist futurism of Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* of 1887 and extending well into the early years of the early 20th century with numerous published utopian novels, an Arts and Crafts idealization of the train and the streetcar often (and with some irony) accompanied the rustic life. For greater North Park, Wishon's Forthcamp streetcar line of 1903 (expanded in 1909) completed the creation of place. Unfortunately, the streetcar line also destined Forthcamp to become a major thoroughfare into the business core of Fresno as the suburbs continued to expand during the 20th century. The linear extension of the streetcar service first carried residents further out: original Arts and Crafters did in fact move as styles changed and idealism waned. Of interest, Albert G. Wishon, John G. Porter, William Hanger, and Ivan Carter McIndoo all moved in 1915-17. In the latter cases, the families only lived in the neighborhood about five to six years, relocating yet further north in again *avant-garde* Prairie Style houses. At intersections like that of Forthcamp and Belmont, streetcar business nodes developed and encroached upon the residential character of the neighborhood. The large, airy houses one by one became boarding houses, much as their late 19th century predecessors had in the true downtown of the city. By the time of publication of the 1918 Sanborn maps, a number of North Park houses were noted as "furnished rooms."

With the civic and cultural fragmentation generated by both world wars, and the new focus on the automobile, the streetcar Arts and Crafts neighborhood continued its demise. In 1939 the city removed the streetcar line from Forthcamp Avenue, and the boulevard-like thoroughfare was renamed Fulton. Ironically, the very gracious landscaping of the 1902-15 period--once no longer tended--only enhanced the abandoned aura of the neighborhood. Later Sanborn maps show vacant lots bracketing ever-more multi-person rental housing, the very antithesis of what the Arts and Crafters had attempted to create. In some cases, apartments like those at 337-343 North Van Ness of circa 1937 served as infill housing for original garden areas (in this instance, that of Matthew McIndoo to the immediate north at 345 North Van Ness). Original greater North Park residences had no need of garages, and typically do not appear to have had them in the first years. Their orientation was to the streetcar line. By the 1920s-40s, however, garages were a prominent element depicted on the Sanborn maps, quite profoundly altering neighborhood access and giving alleys a different kind of life. (A number of these later garages still exist today, with alley access.)

The Brooks house was likely one of the earliest true Craftsman bungalows built in Fresno, with dark-stained upper story shingling and light-toned lower story siding reflective of the color/tone scheme prevalent for the Craftsman-Colonial Revival stylistic mix. Uniform multi-pane double-hung windows--with upper sash made tiny in 18/1 configuration to imitate true Colonial glass--is especially evocative of the early Craftsman aesthetic. The Dutch gambrel roof is yet another element incorporating the appreciation of actual Colonial architecture by the initial followers (designers) within the Arts and Crafts movement. Colonial Revival columns are commonly found with both the Colonial Revival and the Craftsman, but this element most often signaled a shift toward the separate Colonial Revival, rather than the medieval colonial-like design attributes

absorbed within the Arts and Crafts. Extensive very early use of Craftsman clinker brick for the Brooks porch piers is an especially noteworthy departure for the predictable columns and here clearly speaks to the Arts and Crafts. Fresno's only other extant Dutch Colonial dwelling of the first years of the 20th century appears to be the Van Valkenburgh house located at 1125 T Street of 1903. Van Valkenburgh design aesthetics did not reference the Arts and Crafts.

Brooks lived in his North Park house at least into the early 1920s and as a non-mobile resident appears to have helped in stabilizing his immediate location in North Park. The eastern face of the 300 block of Forthcamp (Fulton) between Mildreda and Franklin maintained a solid single family profile through 1918/19 (Sanborns). Seven dwellings--all large-- lined the streetside with only one--320 North Fulton to the south--converted to a nine unit apartment. On the western side of the block the Sample Sanitarium occupied the southernmost lots, with five private residences filling in the streetscape. Both to the south and to the north more severe neighborhood fragmentation had begun. Chester Harvey Rowell's house to the near southwest at the corner of Mildreda and Fulton had become a boarding house. On the 400 block of Fulton, only the Charles H. Cobb house was still in single family use on the west side of the street. On the east side of the 400 block, the dwellings were nearly all single story, with the simple Colonial Revival box still extant at 460 North Fulton likely typical. The larger Benjamin M. Stone house at 408 North Fulton had, in similar fashion to the John William Proffitt residence across the street, originally included an expansive gardened corner lot. By 1918/19 the gardened portion of both the Stone and the Proffitt lots had been converted for the addition of other (smaller) dwellings (soon all in multi-person use), with shared garages often to be found at the alley lot lines. By the time the 1948 Sanborn maps appeared, the Brooks house itself had been subdivided into six apartments.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

The Brooks house is a two-story wood-frame structure representative of the Craftsman bungalow with pronounced Dutch Colonial Revival details, and dates from circa 1905. Features include: a moderately pitched combination Dutch gambrel and front gable roof; very wide boxed eaves for the Dutch gambrel section; narrow boxed eaves for the cross front gable section; flush Dutch gambrel facades; second story sheathing in rectangular-cut dark-stained shingles; first story sheathing in three-lap round-edge bevel siding; centered entry with sidelights, flanked by windows; 18/1 and 6/1 Craftsman windows with moderate-width simple surrounds; full-story pedimented west façade dormer (actually the front gable portion of the house extended through the gambrel cross section); full-façade porch supported by thickly proportioned Doric columns with simple capitals and bases; porch stick railing with clinker brick piers and wall base; two interior clinker brick chimneys; clinker brick exterior chimney on the north façade; rear shed-roof second story sleeping porch extending from the south façade of the front gable wing, supported by single thickly proportioned Doric column set on a clinker brick plinth; wood-frame stairs directly beneath the rear sleeping porch; narrow louvered rectangular gable peak vents; basement and brick foundation sill.

One of three original North Park houses remaining clustered in the 300 block of Fulton, the Brooks residence still retains ties to its lot and streetscape. Sanborn maps of 1906 illustrated a two-story wood-frame structure with a south-facing one-story porch to the northeast rear of the property at the alley. The building is shown as having had a hip roof: likely it was some type of carriage house. No automobile garage existed on the lot. By the time of the 1948 Sanborn maps, the Brooks house had been converted into six apartments, with the rear original carriage house apparently having been remodeled into two adjoining garages along the alley (possibly accommodating three or more vehicles). Today no outbuildings remain on the lot. A tree lawn with two deodar cedars was added to the property circa 1910, after the double-tracking of Forthcamp (Fulton) for expanded streetcar service. Beaux-Arts style street lamps further enhanced the streetscape during the 1920s. Tree lawn, mature deodar cedars and street lamps are all extant, although the property is in deteriorated condition. Adjoining the property to the south, the Colonial Revival Wishon house of 1904 and the Colonial

Revival Hays house of circa 1907 remain as neighbors to the adjoining south (at 340 and 330 North Fulton, respectively).

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Completion of the State Route 180 Freeway Gap Closure project required the acquisition and clearance of right-of-way through the former North Park neighborhood. Initial cultural resource surveys conducted in the mid-1970s concluded, with SHPO concurrence, that there were no historically significant properties impacted by the project. On that basis, acquisition and clearance of right-of-way was begun until the project was shelved for a period during the 1980s. When the project was re-activated, supplemental studies reached the conclusion that individual buildings within the project area were National Register-eligible; earlier right-of-way clearance had so altered the neighborhood that there was no longer any district potential. Among the eligible buildings was the Ira H Brooks House, which had been acquired by the state department of transportation and was located within the footprint of the proposed freeway. The Memorandum of Agreement developed for the freeway project called for HABS documentation of the Brooks House prior to its relocation by the state department of transportation for resale. Following documentation, the Brooks House was relocated to 224 North Fulton. Pre-move photographic documentation was completed by John W. Snyder for the California Department of Transportation in March 1992.